

Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council

Meeting Minutes, May 4, 2017

Attending: Rodney Barker, Bob Burke, Barbara Darnell, Steve Feinstein, Groot Gregory, Nathaniel Lichtin, Srdj Nedeljkovic, Julius Starkman, Amy Wayne

Ex Officio: John Rice

Guests:

Richard Baker, Newton Highlands

Barbara Balasa, Columbus Street Newton Highlands

Brenda Noel, City Council Candidate, Ward 6

Larry Rosenberg, Lincoln Street, Historic District Interest

Jonathan L. Roses, Columbus Street, Newton Highlands

Lorraine Roses, Columbus Street, Newton Highlands

Don Ross, Winslow Road, Waban

Secretary's Report and Treasurer's Report

Srdj opened the meeting at 7:35 PM. The Minutes for April were reviewed and approved with minor revisions.

The Treasurer's Report included the following. As of April 30, 2017, we had \$14,651.36 in our checking account; \$10,181.00 is currently available plus \$120.00 available in cash. The Council voted 9-0 to authorize \$1,500.00 for Village Day related activities. The Council also voted 9-0 to reallocate \$2,600.00 for Historic District activities from Historic District documentation.

Buttonwood Restaurant

A coowner of the proposed Buttonwood Restaurant came before the Council to outline the restaurant's operational plans, menu and how it planned to interact with nearby neighbors and the community as a whole.

Buttonwood will occupy space vacated last year by 51 Lincoln. He showed us a copy of their menu, plans for a Sunday Brunch and noted that they planned to seat people until 10:30 PM on weekends and would continue to serve patrons already on the premises at 10:30 until 1AM.

Several homeowners on Columbus Street showed up to voice concerns about the problem of late night noise when 51 Lincoln Street was operational. Barbara Balasa and Jonathan and Lorraine Roses stated they hoped the new owners would take steps to curb this problem. Rodney noted that he, too, had received complaints about noise from 51 Lincoln Street from late night patrons and employees who lingered to talk loudly after the restaurant closed.

Steve suggested the Buttonwood post signs about the noise problem. John suggested that the Traffic Council could be approached to have employees use parking lot instead of on street parking near the restaurant. The owner noted that employees are not allowed to smoke outside the restaurant. Steve suggested that the new owners write the neighbors on Columbus Street to let them know he understands their concerns and is taking steps to address the problem.

Newton Highlands Local Historic District

Rodney and Bob updated the Council on events since April's meeting. The Community Meeting on April 23rd at the Congregational Church went well in terms of the presentations by the 3 Local Historic District Commission Chairpersons. They made credible and balanced cases, from their hands on experience, for why Historic Districts are important and beneficial, but they also noted some items that could, on occasion, get contentious.

Both supporters and Opponents were present and the opponents used the occasion to present a generalized but passionate case against a local historic district here without reference to the 3 LHD Commission Chairs or what they had said in their presentations.

The big event is the formal public hearing on the Highlands LHD Monday May 8th before the Zoning and Planning Committee. We are leafletting and expect a good showing from supporters, but also anticipate that opponents will be out in force as well.

We've been told that there will be an up or down vote on the LHD proposal sometime in September. This will be a busy summer.

Fall Election Meetings in the Highlands

An extended discussion took place on the kinds of community meetings we would help organize in the Highlands for candidates in this year's municipal election. A consensus evolved quickly that we should not sponsor mayoral debates (either for the preliminary or final) because other groups and organizations will be organizing several of these from now through November. Just about everyone thought it best to focus primarily on the Charter Commission and City Council races, particularly those for Ward Councilors in the districts serving the Highlands.

Village Day

- Steve reported that plans continue apace for this year's Village Day. Here are the highlights.
- We have raised \$6,000,00 the includes a \$1,200,00 donation from Whole Foods.
- We will have a Bouncy House.
- We will also have the ever popular "Touch a Truck" set of municipal vehicles.
- Chris Pitts will organize the music and sounds.
- We are optimistic about the road race, but still figuring out ways to promote it most effectively.
- There will be no "Silent Auction". Too much work for too little return
- Overall, both revenue and expenses will be down from last year. Hopefully, everything will even out.

Items in Brief

- John noted that Taiwan Day will be held out of the Hyde Center this coming Sunday. This is a very impressive event that is not to be missed.
- We are sending a letter to Ruth Balsler to thank her for all the help she has provided on the Highlands MBTA Accessibility Project and to ask her continued involvement to coax the project to full fruition.
- Srdj sent his promised personal letter to the Governor and State Transportation Secretary asking them to ensure the placement of all Needham Street utilities underground even if this delays the project's completion.
- Planning for the Northland Project is looking for a 2020 completion date. Srdj noted that this is another sign that there is still time to consider placing all utilities underground.
- The fence has been taken down at the property on Beacon and Beethoven near Zervas.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Burke, Secretary, Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council